



# STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

301 CENTENNIAL MALL SOUTH • PO BOX 94987 • LINCOLN, NE 68509

Ramada Limited North  
4433 N. 27<sup>th</sup> Street  
Lincoln, NE 68504  
402.476.2222

August 20, 2002  
10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

## MINUTES

Present: Christensen, Curry, Fox, Gieschen, Ham, Holcomb, Jelinek, Lloyd, Nolan Brown, Ortmeier, Rasmussen, Shepard, Sorensen, Vavrina  
Absent: Berger, Breckner, Davis, Grone, Kolb

I. *Public Comment* – There was no public comment.

II. *Approval of Agenda*

Changes to the agenda included:

- Delete VI.C. SILC Report
- Delete VI.D. ATP Report
- Add VI.E. Membership Update Report

A motion to approve the agenda as amended was made by Fox and seconded by Nolan Brown. Motion passed.

III. *Approval of Minutes from May 21, 2002*

Shepard noted the report from the Interagency Outreach Committee was not included in the minutes. A motion to approve the minutes from the May 21, 2002 meeting was made by Fox and seconded by Shepard. Motion passed.

IV. Director's Report (*Frank Lloyd*)

**1. Employment 2003 Committee** – This subcommittee of the Mental Health Planning and Evaluation Committee (MHPEC) consists of consumers, employers, state agency employees interested in supporting employment for people who experience mental illness. The committee will be conducting employment forums in 3-4 locations across the state. The forums will be from approximately 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m., and include a short presentation by panel members from a variety of employment related perspectives, such as mental health, ticket to work, VR, consumers, etc. The focus for the forums will not be what is wrong with the current system, but what kind of creative solutions can be found for the future. Participants will work in small groups on problem solving to discuss solutions.

**2. Cooperative Agreements** – VR has had mental health cooperative agreements with Community Alliance (Omaha), Cirrus House (Scottsbluff), Liberty Centre (Norfolk), and Central Nebraska Goodwill (Grand Island/Kearney). These agreements provide services to consumers with mental illness in an effort to achieve employment. Once the consumer becomes an outcome through the agreement (have maintained employment for 3 months), the consumer becomes a part of Voc Rehab's employment warranty program, where they are provided the assistance needed to maintain and/or advance in employment. All of the agreements were renewed for another year beginning July 1, 2002.

**3. Service Specialist position** – The Department of Education recently participated in a classification study in an effort to appropriately classify and compensate staff. The results of the study recommended that VR develop a Service Specialist position that would provide direct services to consumers. The Service Specialist positions requires only a bachelor's degree, rather than the Master's degree required by the Rehabilitation Specialist. The creation of this position has been approved, and offices are currently interviewing to fill several Service Specialist positions. Offices are reporting that they are getting a lot more applicants for this position than when they advertised for the master's degree position. This gives VR more people to select from, and provides more opportunities for minorities or people with disabilities who are qualified to apply.

**4. Budget** – To date, no cuts in VR funding have been made at the State level. The Appropriations Committee and Legislature recognize that the state will lose \$3.69 in federal funds for every \$1.00 cut in state funds. At the federal level, VR anticipates a 2-2.5% increase next year. VR currently has enough state money to match all of the federal funds in FY02 and FY03.

**5. Disability Awareness month (October)** – VR is developing a publication featuring employers around the state that have done exemplary work in hiring people with disabilities. Each of the 14 teams nominated an employer for the publication. It will include a story about each employer, and a picture of the manager/president. The intent is to find out about their experiences in hiring people with disabilities, and give the employers an opportunity to promote their company. The publication will be distributed to communities at events which recognize disability awareness month.

## **6. Transition Improvement for 2002-2003 –**

*1. Focus Group Input* - In the past, VR has not felt that they were being as effective as they could be in the area of transition. Jack Shepard recently conducted a focus group of parents and educators to find out what VR should do differently in the area of transition. From this focus groups, VR heard that more information is needed by parents about transition. To address this issue, VR is developing a monthly publication called *Making It Work*, targeted for parents and students, that will identify information on transition services. The publication will be a forum for other groups to provide information to parents who want to know about transition services. It will direct parents to appropriate web sites, and provide other information from the parent training center, Children's Mental Health, DD system, VR, and several other resources. SRC members will receive a copy each month.

VR has set up a web site for people to subscribe to the monthly publication, and will add SRC members to the subscription list. Copies of the first publication will be taken by VR staff to schools in September with subscription cards, which will allow people to sign up on the web or mail the card to us. Since the publication will only be available by subscription, VR will be working on marketing it in the schools.

*2. Transition Planner* – In an effort to provide schools with consistent information about Vocational Rehabilitation and their role in the Transition process, VR has developed a Transition Planner. It is intended as a guide for educators and will cover information such as how VR views transition, the employment program, employment warranty program, how referrals are made, how information is exchanged, eligibility, IEP process, etc. The planner will include a 2 page form that VR staff and the schools will complete to address issues such as who VR staff can contact, when they can come to the school, how they can access information and/or the students, etc. VR hopes the planner will clear up confusion in the schools about VR's role in the transition process.

Jack and Frank will be discussing the planner with the Special Education Supervisors Association meeting in September and explaining its intent.

V. Old Business

A. Confidentiality (*Kristin Petersen*)

Frank had asked Kristin Petersen, Attorney for Department of Education, to present information to the council regarding the staff development training she is providing to all VR offices on confidentiality.

Kristin informed the council that the training helps operationalize the principles of respect and dignity for consumers being served by Vocational Rehabilitation. Confidential information is anything personally identifiable to that individual and involves respecting that 24 hours a day. VR staff cannot leave the office and discuss confidential information with families and/or friends. These principles apply to everyone in the organization. VR believes that as staff become more familiar with the issue, it might encourage consumers to share their information if they feel assured that the information is kept confidential.

Kristin provided the council with information regarding the clients rights to see his/her case file, how staff handle information requests from third parties, re-release restrictions, written releases and other information pertinent to confidentiality.

At least one staff person in each office has been assigned the responsibility for handling request for information that come through the office. An outline of the principles, policy, and process are also available to staff on VR's internal web site, and the training is being incorporated into New Staff Orientation for all new VR staff.

VI. Reports

A. Committee Reports

*Interagency/Annual Report* – A Customer Relations Survey developed by the committee for agencies/individuals who refer people to VR was distributed (*handout Customer Relations Survey*). The intent of the survey is to determine if a correlation exists between the outcomes at Voc Rehab and who referred those consumers to them. The committee requested additional information from VR regarding referral sources, # of referral sources, and # of outcomes per year from those referral sources. Don will work with the committee to get them the information they need.

The committee requested council approve of the survey and approval to mail it out to anyone who serves as a referral source for Vocational Rehabilitation. A conference call will be set up with the committee to discuss with VR who to send the survey to.

A motion to approve the survey and have it sent to referral agencies was made by Curry and seconded by Fox. Motion passed unanimously.

Shepard will submit the committee report to be included in the Annual Report. Additional data request for the Annual Report will also be discussed by the committee on the conference call.

*Strategic Issues* – 1) Ticket to Work: There is nothing new to report. The committee will continue following the issues and report on in the future. As the ticket comes to NE, Don will be providing additional information to the council; 2) Special Education - the committee's recommendation regarding a publication regarding transition information is currently being addressed by VR. Their other recommendation involved developing material on services for students who are at risk of dropping out. Jack and Frank will be meeting with Mark Krei from Children's Mental Health in HHS to see if they can find ways to be more effective in identifying those students earlier. For VR, this issue may not

be as relevant, as VR staff need to focus on kids closer to graduation moving into the workforce. However, it is possible VR could play some role in the partnership to address the needs to these students; 3) The population in rural areas is shifting closer toward the interstate, and the committee reviewed how VR could distribute resources differently. It had been suggested that VR begin to move staff toward these more populous areas where jobs are available. At this point, VR will continue to maintain a statewide presence, and the committee expressed reservations about shifting staff away from rural areas. Frank will discuss the issue with Mark Schultz at a later date. The committee suggested not shifting staff, but looking at self-employment or non-traditional outcomes for people in rural area, or providing services in a different way (e.g., mobility).

Mark Schultz will write the committee report for the annual report.

*Client Services/Satisfaction* – The committee reported that out of 1339 surveys distributed to consumers regarding their satisfaction with VR, 197 returned. Because of confidentiality issues, the responses need editing before they can be given out to the council. The committee will edit the information out, and provide a copy to Cathy to send out with the minutes. At the next meeting, the committee will address whether action needs to be taken based on the information from the survey, and discuss what that action might be. The committee suggested the report be distributed to the area administrator's, who could then the results to their area for discussion. A motion was made by Vavrina and seconded by Nolan Brown that a report on the survey be sent to area administrators, and that they be asked to report to Don what action they took as a result of the survey. The information provided to Don by the area administrators will be shared with the council at the next meeting. Motion passed unanimously

A motion was made by Vavrina and seconded by Ortmeier that the results of the survey be sent to all council members, once now and again before the next meeting, after it is edited for confidentiality issues. Motion passed unanimously.

Vicki was elected to write the committee report for the annual report.

B. CAP Report (*Vicki Rasmussen*)

The CAP report was distributed to council members prior to the meeting. There were no questions regarding the concerns listed. Council members indicated that it is helpful to have information regarding VR policies as they relate to the CAP cases included in the CAP report. Vicki indicated that when there are issues repeatedly in a certain office, the office director usually addresses the issue individually with his team by doing staff development training. Statewide issues are built into the CAP training provided by Vicki.

Vicki reported back on an issue from the last meeting regarding the CAP's request that the Department of Motor Vehicles have their driving manual available on tape. The DMV has put the manual on cassette tape and it is now available at all locations.

C. SILC Report (*Tim Kolb*)

Tim Kolb was not able to attend the meeting.

D. ATP Report (*Mark Schultz*)

Mark Schultz was not able to attend the meeting.

E. Membership Update (*Sue Gieschen*)

Sue reported that the Executive Committee has recommended Rod Brecker be terminated from the council due to lack of attendance at meeting during the past year.

Debra Holcomb, representative from the State Workforce Investment Board, has been replaced by Regina LittleBeaver, whose terms will begin on October 1, 2002.

The terms of Judy Ortmeier, Sue Gieschen, and Jack Shepard end on September 30, 2002. Sue and Jack have agreed to serve another three year term. Judy has declined the invitation to serve another term.

Sharon Bloechle has agreed to serve on the council again. Her term will begin October 1, 2002.

## VII. New Business

### A. State Plan and Policy Issues (*Don Crouch*)

There were no new issues to report at this time.

### B. VR Committee Reports

#### 1. Initial Interview Committee (*Judy Vohland*) and 2. IPE Process (*Dennis King*)

Dennis King, Program Director for VR, presented information to council about VR's new process for implementing the Individual Plan for Employment (IPE). Dennis and Janet Drudik have been co-chairing the development of the new process which is intended to engage consumers earlier in the process and allow them to make more informed decisions about their plan throughout its development. The new process will create a standardized approach across the state to ensure VR is more effective and efficient in delivering services.

The process has been piloted with one team in the Norfolk office since the middle of May. Based on feedback from the consumers and staff who have been involved, several changes have been made to the process and the workbook. Eventually, the process will be implemented statewide.

Dennis distributed and reviewed a flowchart (*handout Front End Activity Flow*) which visually outlines the IPE process. With the new process, VR is trying to be less bureaucratic and eliminate the large amount of data collection activities that have been done in the past. The major areas in the new process include:

***Referral*** - staff provide information about VR to be sure the consumer is in the right place. They gather a small amount of personal information about the consumer, including information about their disability. If the VR staff person believes the person could be eligible based on the information they have been given to this point, the consumer is scheduled for VR orientation.

***VR Orientation*** – Each office does orientation differently. Orientation provides information about VR, its purpose, goal, eligibility requirements, the IPE, and expectations of VR and the consumer. After orientation, if the consumer is interested in VR services and is a recipient of social security benefits, they meet with a benefits analysis specialists. The consumer needs to understand that VR is about employment. That means the goal will be to work with them to maximize potential which includes getting them off of social security benefits.

***Initial Interview***– Judy Vohland, Area Administrator has chaired the VR committee looking at the initial interview with the consumer. In the past, the initial interview was a data collection process, where VR gathered as much information as possible to make eligibility decisions. The Initial Interview Committee reviewed complaints that had

been received by the Client Assistance Program and found that many times the client didn't feel they were being heard. VR was losing a lot of potential consumers who got discouraged during the current intake process, left and didn't return. It was determined that VR does not need all of the information to open a case; most of the information can be collected as it is needed through the course of the plan (*handout – QUEST Front End Data Requirements*).

With the new process, VR uses the interview to engage the person in a discussion about their interest in VR and to begin to develop a relationship. (sample handout from Judy) The committee recommended the goal of the initial interview be that the consumer leaves knowing who can help them and what the next steps are. The interview should include a discussion about work, the impact of work in the consumers life, what successes they have had, how their disability has impacted previous work experiences, etc.

VR used to send an application form out to clients before they came in or had consumers come in and fill out forms. This benefited VR, not the consumer. A simpler handout (*handout Talking About Work*) was developed to be used if staff needed some place to start in the interview. The new form gathers information such as what jobs they like, don't like, what they do well, etc. The next step is a group or individual orientation.

Other suggestions regarding the Initial Interview -

- An Action Planner was developed that the specialist and client fill out together;
- Consumers should not leave without scheduling the next appointment; and
- A counselor self evaluation was developed for the consumer to identify how the meeting went. This is reviewed by the office director and the team (*handouts Counselor Self-Evaluation and Questionnaire for Consumers*)

**Eligibility** – (*handout Eligibility Interview*) Determination of eligibility could occur immediately after the VR orientation. If the consumer is presumed eligible, they can continue on to self exploration and potentially have a plan in place by the end of the day. VR is not trying to rush consumers through, but to develop a process that allows for as much time as the consumer needs it to take. For consumers who know what they want, they are able to get through the process quickly; for those who need additional help in determining what they want, the process can be slowed down the process.

**Self exploration** - Dennis and Janet have developed a workbook for consumers that can be completed on their own, with VR staff, with family/friends, or in a class/workshop. The self-exploration workbook looks at the consumers values, interests, barriers to work, and other areas that need to be addressed if they are going to be successful in achieving an employment objective. Completing the workbook takes approximately 2-3 hours. So far, approximately 60% of the consumers who have been determined eligible have gone through the self-exploration workbook. The other 40% leave with a planner so they know the next steps.

The pilot in Norfolk will continue to be monitored and feedback received so adjustments can be made to process prior to implementing it statewide.

C. JAM Report (*Sue Gieschen*)

Sue attended the Joint Agency Meeting (JAM) in Gering this summer. Approximately 100-125 people attended the event, which was sponsored by PILS.

D. Annual Report (*Sue Gieschen*)

The deadline for committee's to submit their reports for the annual report is at the

October SRC meeting. Committees need to decide what the report will include and who will write report and return that information to Cathy.

E. Election of Officers (*Sue Gieschen*)

Fox made a motion, seconded by Vavrina, that the rules be suspended so the council can proceed with the election of officers at this meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

Nominations for Chairperson:

- Vavrina nominated Fox
- Fox nominated by Gieschen

The council voted by secret ballot and Gieschen was elected chairperson by a majority of the vote.

Nominations for Vice-Chairperson:

- Rasmussen nominated Fox

No other nominations were made so Fox was proclaimed Vice-Chairperson.

Others elected to serve on the Executive Committee:

Fox nominated Michelle Davis to serve at the representative of business, industry and labor;

Vavrina volunteered to serve;

Rasmussen nominated Ham to serve.

Nominations ceased and the Executive Committee was approved by acclamation.

F. Meeting Dates(*Sue Gieschen*)

Meeting dates for the 2002-2003 State Rehabilitation Council meeting are:

Tuesday, October 15  
Tuesday, December 17  
Tuesday, February 18  
Tuesday, April 15  
Tuesday, August 19

All meetings will be schedule from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. A motion to accept the meeting dates for FY03 was made by Fox and seconded by Curry. Motion passed unanimously.

G. Ticket to Work (*Don Crouch*)

Don indicated that he would make a more formal presentation to the council at the next meeting. Nebraska will implement the ticket in June, 2003. Don and Dennis King have been talking to each of the offices about Ticket to Work, what it means for VR in the future, and how it impact benefits analysis/planning. The legislation for Ticket to work also includes the Work Incentives Improvement Act, which makes incentives available to people so they will try and go back to work. VR believes this is an opportunity to do a better job of helping people get off of SSI/SSDI. VR will have a specialist trained on each team to do benefits analysis/planning, and have granted with Easter Seals to provide benefits planning for VR consumers.

Frank Lloyd, Director of Voc Rehab, presented certificates to Judy Ortmier and Debra Holcomb for their service on the SRC. VR values the input they have contributed during their SRC terms, and appreciate their willingness to take the time to serve.

A motion to adjourn was made by Ortmeier and seconded by Holcomb. Motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Items for next meeting (*October 15, 2002*)

Staff Retention Committee – *Mel Bargas*  
Ticket to Work – *Don Crouch*  
Annual Report